

Through the work of Lev Vygotsky (*Mind in Society*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), cognition has been understood to be a "situated" phenomenon, related to the diverse environments in which children live and learn. However, Rogoff and colleagues argue that some stages of cognitive maturity are recognized universally. Weisner and Gallimore discuss cross-cultural data on child responsibilities in agricultural societies, particularly with regard to sibling care, and John and Beatrice Whiting's "Six Cultures Study" examines altruistic and egoistic activities of children in the outer suburbs of Boston and in rural Mexican communities. They identify trends specific to early and middle childhood and document the ways in which children who contribute to agricultural production spend their time. Gaskins emphasizes the importance of work for older children, while Wenger points to the importance of gender in differentiating activities in rural societies.

The authors acknowledge the Eurocentric influence of nineteenth-century Anglo-American and Western European psychological and biological sciences on early childhood anthropological studies, and they provide the reader with important theoretical and methodological changes that have resulted in the transformation of the anthropological study of children and childhood. I recommend this book as a good introduction to the study of child development that draws upon anthropology's unique ability to hone in on both the extraordinarily complex phenomenon of individual childhood agency and the social constructions that tend to bind and limit our notions of children as social actors.

Marcia Mikulak
University of North Dakota

The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel, Changelings. David F. Lancy. New York: Cambridge University Press, 488 pp. \$99.00, cloth; \$39.99, paper.

David Lancy's original goal was to rebut a statement that anthropologists have largely ignored children. That rebuttal grew into *The Anthropology of Childhood*, an exhaustive examination of childhood that draws from the ethnographic record, studies of nonhuman primates, archaeology, historical accounts, and even news reports. Lancy carefully reevaluates each aspect of childhood, from a comparative cross-cultural perspective, to arrive at a more holistic picture of how children live, learn, and transition into adults. Lancy successfully challenges many of the commonly held assumptions about child development and parenting practices, offering a corrective view that integrates disparate perspectives from evolutionary anthropology, psychological anthropology, and cultural anthropology, among others.

Each of the first eight chapters analyzes a specific aspect of childhood, beginning with a discussion of what exactly childhood is and how children are made, and leading up to puberty, adolescence, marriage, and family formation. Much of the book's comparison between developed and developing nations' child-rearing practices and attitudes centers on the generalization that the world can be categorized into neontocracies and gerontocracies. In the neontocracies (Europe, North America, and East Asia) societies are child-centered and children are esteemed as priceless cherubs. All household economic and family planning decisions are made with primary consideration given to the children or child-to-be. In the gerontocracies (in Lancy's view the rest of the world) fertility is prized, but children themselves are not. Children inhabit some of the lowest social positions, often viewed as commoditized chattel, and their welfare is not a primary consideration in household affairs. Lancy investigates these two poles, as well as the area in between, by considering ecological, economic, and cultural issues and life history models from evolutionary anthropology. In doing so, he illustrates how multiple, simultaneous factors result in a broad spectrum of parental investment strategies and family structures.

A central feature in *The Anthropology of Childhood* is understanding cross-cultural variation in who takes care of children and how children learn. While mother is commonly considered the center of the child's universe in the industrialized neotocracies, in the majority of the remaining world mother is not the primary caretaker. As many anthropologists can attest, close kin, especially older female siblings and peers, assume the bulk of child-minding duties. Relevant historical records reveal that as wealth and affluence grew in Egypt, Rome, and Europe, entire systems of professional childminders arose, often removing parents from any direct contact with children. Another key element of the book centers on how children learn the skills necessary to be competent adults and what systems are utilized cross-culturally to meet these ends. Parents in highly industrialized countries, where the demographic transition has taken place, are pressured by child development ideologies, practitioners, and products to begin the educational process as early as possible, even in the womb. In contrast, in "the village," Lancy's construct of communities in the developing world, children are considered senseless and unteachable before the age of five. Fundamental differences also exist once the educational process begins. Industrialized societies rely on a system of formalized and direct teaching that is extended beyond the classroom by parents, especially mothers, but in village life teaching through facilitation is much more common than direct instruction. Despite this huge variation in the learning process, all societies manage to raise competent adults who are well-adjusted to their own culture. However, serious issues often arise when industrialized education styles are exported to developing areas, and Lancy spends considerable time discussing problems as well as possible solutions.

"Nowhere are Euroamerican views on childhood and those of the larger world more at odds than on the issue of work" (Lancy 2009:234). When and how children contribute to the family economy varies greatly from society to society, based on the gender of children and their birth order, as well as attributes of the greater social, cultural, ecological, and economic context. Yet, Lancy illustrates that cross-culturally some aspects remain consistent. For instance, girls, whose sphere of work centers around mother, generally begin the transition from play to work earlier than boys.

One of the key strengths of *The Anthropology of Childhood* derives from the placement of ethnographic and historical examples within ecological, economic, and cultural contexts, and the realization that none of these spheres is mutually exclusive. Lancy is ecumenical with regard to theory, and he draws extensively from evolutionary anthropology, psychological anthropology, and ethnology. By doing this, Lancy successfully integrates the relevant literature toward a unified body, and he demonstrates how factors of life history, family formation, and the perception of children, as cherubs, chattel, or changelings, vary. Throughout *The Anthropology of Childhood*, and especially in the last two chapters, Lancy confronts several current issues, such as No Child Left Behind, child combatants, and preschool reform. *The Anthropology of Childhood's* exhaustive literature review, careful cross-cultural examination of children, and synthetic analysis provide important insights into all aspects of childhood, as well as setting a new standard for scholarship on the subject.

Matt Bridges and John Bock
California State University–Fullerton

Houses in Motion: The Experience of Place and the Problem of Belief in Urban Malaysia.
Richard Baxtrom. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008, 283 pp. \$55.00, cloth.

Students of diversity often assume that multiculturalism emerged as a political philosophy in the United States and Europe during the 1970s and 1980s, cohering around the politics of migration, colonialism, slavery, and identity. The problem with such a genealogy is that it